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## The Teaching of Values

I have always had difficulty in understanding the meaning and import of the phrase “to teach values” or the larger phrase, “the enterprise of teaching values” (and all their many cognates) largely because it has never been clear to me what teacher *doesn't* “teach values.” Whether intentional or not, designed or not, conscious or not, teachers communicate values — all sorts of them — as much by their attitudes and by the way they teach as in the subjects taught.

This is not to deny, of course, that a teacher can be quite deliberate about what values he wishes to teach (though knowing this doesn't guarantee his success), nor is it to deny that he can inquire rigorously and systematically into the subjects of how and what values are best taught. But, to repeat, I would claim that values of various sorts get taught whether or not teachers consciously or intentionally set out to teach them.

The foregoing remarks are not especially meant to be critical of David Lawson's book, *The Teaching of Values* (N. P., Canada, 1970) but they are meant to draw attention to serious ambiguities about such phrases as are instanced above and in the title of his book. Does the title promise to tell us *how* to “teach values” (given one part of the ambiguity mentioned, it must be admitted that none of us has a corner on that subject) or *what* values are best or what values are best taught? It turns out, of course, that Dr. Lawson is concerned more with the latter questions although the former is not ignored. His short book is basically a competent and useful summary of four thinkers' views on those questions — Adler's, Dewey's, Sullivan's and Fromm's, the views of two moral philosophers and two psychiatrists.

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However, while not critical of the ambiguities mentioned, this reviewer must note a further ambiguity which pervades much discussion of values, one which creeps into this book perhaps unconsciously. The first chapter's second section is titled, "Centrality of the Teaching of Values" and it opens with this sentence:

Crucial to education is education in values, which enables man to discover ways of developing awareness, dignity, responsibility and a capacity for reason and for love . . .

The fact is, of course, that an education in values *may* enable someone to discover ways of developing awareness, dignity, etc., but another or different but equally crucial "education in values" may equip him, or help to equip him with precisely the opposite values (or disvalues), depending of course on who educates his values and what values the teachers have or what values they wish to try to teach. Surely Dr. Lawson would not deny that a boy brought up in a Weatherman's, a Panther's, a KKK organizer's or a headhunter's household is being "taught values" although they may not be the values Dr. Lawson cherishes. This is not to deny the "centrality" of teaching values. It *is* to deny that the words "values" or "teaching values" necessarily have the sanguine meanings built into them which Dr. Lawson seems to assume and employ. The relevance of this point is not impaired by the thought which ends the sentence quoted directly above:

. . . in times when the values he has inherited may no longer be appropriate to the world he inhabits,

for surely that temporal qualification affects not at all Dr. Lawson's interpretation or understanding of the phrase "teaching values" or "education in values." That is, an "education in values," despite its ambiguity, would still be, in Dr. Lawson's mind, "crucial."

Generalizing one important aspect of this issue, it can be seen that Dr. Lawson follows something of an old tradition in using the English term "value" in an honorific or *pro* sense, despite the fact that he well knows that that is not its only use, that "negative" values exist as well as "positive" ones. Failure to concede this point (or in other words the failure to use a more critical value language) results in relatively cheap victories, moral as well as terminological, for no distinction being made no distinction is recognized. Hence, the author can employ his 'value' without testing it against what people do in fact value or how they use value language.

It is no argument against this criticism that, after all Dr. Lawson didn't write a sociological book wherein he might have paid somewhat closer attention to the myriad ways in which values do in fact get taught (in school and out), but that he has written a chiefly pedagogical book, narrowing that even further to a summarization of four prominent thinkers' views on values. For Lawson is as concerned to harmonize, if that is the word, his four authors' views with his own view or theory that certain values above all demand our attention and our teaching, namely, those specified in the quotation two paragraphs above. Another way of making this same point is to state that Dr. Lawson's defense of his own "theory" is relatively weak, that it needs firmer discussion and defense, say, along the lines of Hare's *The Language of Morals*.

## REVIEWS

**E. A. Winter and D. D. Harris. TASMANIA: REGIONS AND THEMES. Melbourne: F. W. Cheshire, 1969. 167 pp., illus., A\$3.50.**

Stemming partly from a deference given to man-land studies, Australia is frequently allocated at least as many lessons as India or China in the regional sections of Canadian, British and other geography syllabuses. Although a justification for the continuance of this seemingly disproportionate allocation may be based upon the criterion of total area rather than of total population number, the increasing trend toward more anthropocentric or socially-inclined approaches in school geography suggests that much greater attention should be given to the more settled parts of Australia than has previously been the case. Whether facts or concepts about Australia might be given either a relatively small or a continued significant place within a geography curriculum is a matter that can, or should, be easily decided by the in-

dividual teacher. Of much greater importance is the unsatisfied need for a variety of materials that can be readily analysed in the classroom to invoke fairly accurate portrayals of the continent. In this respect, Tasmania — still largely unknown to many Australians, let alone Canadians — has been by-passed by writers of school geography textbooks in Australia and elsewhere. By the long overdue publication of Winter and Harris' excellent book, this omission is rectified.

Each of *Tasmania's* nine succinctly-written chapters bears the hallmarks of geographical scholarship and judicious selection of illustration. After an introductory overview of the State's landscapes and "townscapes," each of seven chapters is devoted to a region drawn up by a balanced reference to physical, demographic and economic factors.